

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

DISTRICT 7, REGIONAL PLANNING

IGR/CEQA BRANCH

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November 3, 2004

Ms. Mary Miller
California Department of Water Resources
Southern District - Division of Planning
770 Fairmont Avenue, Suite 102
Glendale, CA 91203-1035

Tehachapi East Afterbay Project ; SCH No. 2004061133
Vic. LOS/138/3-7, LOS/5/81-88 ; IGR/CEQA 040973/EK

Dear Ms. Miller:

We have received the Draft Environmental Impact Report for the project referenced above. A new afterbay reservoir near the East Branch of the California Aqueduct would be constructed to provide water storage additional to that of the existing Tehachapi Afterbay. For the State Department of Transportation (Caltrans) we have the following comments on it.

We appreciate the attention given in the DEIR to construction traffic and its mitigation. Considering especially the absence of a left-turn pocket on SR-138 at 300th Street West, however, we ask that the applicant take the following further measures: Avoid excessive or poorly timed truck platooning (caravans of trucks) during construction, even on days when many truck trips per day to or from a location might be desirable. Limit large size truck trips on State highways typically to times other than peak commute periods.

4a

We are concerned possible about effects on wildlife movement. Currently, the project area is in the vicinity of potential wildlife corridors between the main Tehachapi Mountains and the San Gabriel Mountains to the south as well as the coastal transverse mountain ranges to the west. Corridor linkage has been identified as important for the dispersal of wildlife and plants, important in maintaining biological diversity. Caltrans occasionally has made provisions for wildlife crossings of State facilities that run across such corridors. Generally the protection of wildlife corridors could facilitate and enhance the effectiveness of Caltrans efforts. Therefore we ask for consideration and mitigation of cumulative impacts of the proposed project on any potentially significant wildlife corridors.

4b

If you have any questions for us regarding this matter, please refer to IGR/CEQA No. 040973/EK, and feel free to contact me at (213) 897 – 3747 .

Sincerely,

Cheryl Powell

CHERYL J. POWELL
IGR/CEQA Branch Chief

cc: Mr. Scott Morgan, State Clearinghouse

California Department of Transportation, District 7

November 3, 2004

- 4a** As described in Mitigation Measure TRA-1, a detailed Traffic Control Plan (TCP) would be prepared for project construction by a registered Traffic Engineer. As recommended in the comment, the TCP will address truck platooning (caravans of trucks) and limitations of total truck trips to times other than peak commute periods during construction. Additionally Mitigation Measure AQ-5 requires that material deliveries to the construction site be scheduled outside of peak traffic hours, and that other truck trips be minimized during peak traffic hours.
- 4b** While the proposed project is located approximately one to two miles southeast of the lands in the Tehachapi foothills that are included in the South Coast Missing Linkages Project design, the proposed project would not further inhibit wildlife movement in the project area. Several miles of open space remain north of the project area, which could be utilized by wildlife for dispersal to adjacent lands. Similarly, most of the California Aqueduct, including the proposed project footprint, is not located within the South Coast Eco-region. In addition, the existing Tehachapi Afterbay (Pool 42) currently bisects the area, limiting, to some extent, the north-south movement of wildlife in this area. The proposed reservoir would be located adjacent to the existing Tehachapi Afterbay and would not create new barriers to wildlife movement at this location.